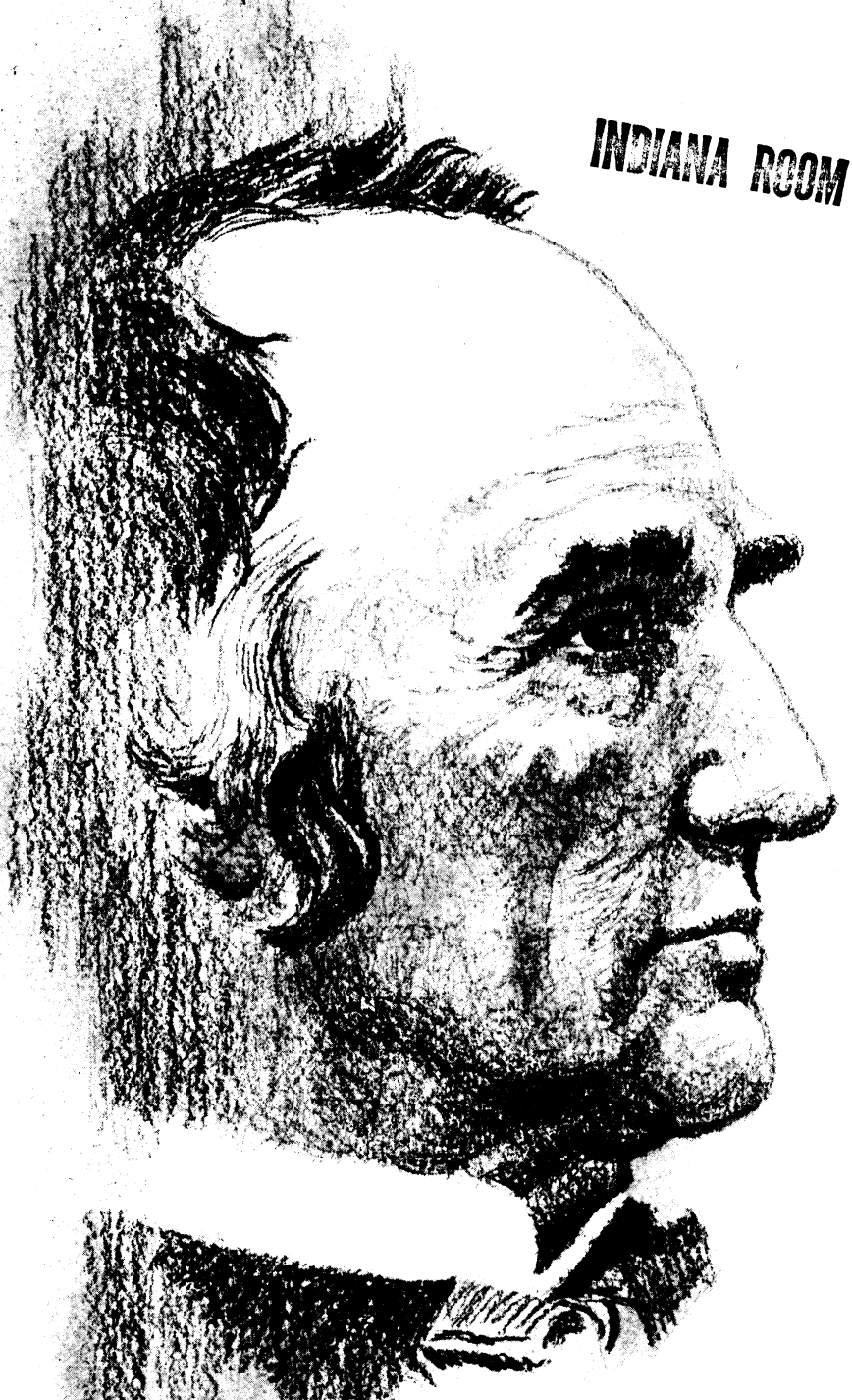
Ind. Blair Family

INDIANA ROOM



Montgomery Blair

POSTMASTER GENERAL

MONTGOMERY BLAIR

Postmaster General

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington 25, D.C. - Price 25 cents

May 3, 1963

FOREWORD

In 1789, Benjamin Franklin wrote to a French friend that "Our Constitution is in actual operation; everything appears to promise that it will last; but in this world nothing is certain but death and taxes."

Franklin had been the first American Postmaster General. In his day, getting the mail through was a rough and problematical business. But, if that imaginative gentleman were alive today, he could, I feel sure, be persuaded to amend his now famed statement to read: "In this world nothing is certain but death, taxes, and the United States Mail."

One man who did much to add certainty to the United States Mail was Montgomery Blair. A lawyer of strong will and forceful convictions, he was an influential as well as controversial figure on the Washington scene. As Postmaster General under Abraham Lincoln, he took over a confusion-riddled Post Office Department and ran it with a firm hand during the turbulent days of the Civil War. Despite the chaos of the period, he introduced some of the most important mail handling innovations and improvements in the Department's history.

We are this year celebrating the centennial of two memorable events—both initiated by Postmaster General Blair. One is the Paris Conference of May 1863—the first international conference on postal problems. Its work led to the founding of the Universal Postal Union, still a model of quiet and effective international cooperation. The second is the beginning of free city delivery, in July 1863, in 49 large post offices.

This pamphlet, on the life and work of Montgomery Blair, is part of our commemoration of these events.

J. Edward Day

POSTMASTER GENERAL

The material in this pamphlet was written and compiled by Rita Lloyd Moroney. The Post Office Department is indebted to the National Gallery of Art, the Columbia Historical Society, the National Archives, and the Library of Congress for photographs used in these pages.

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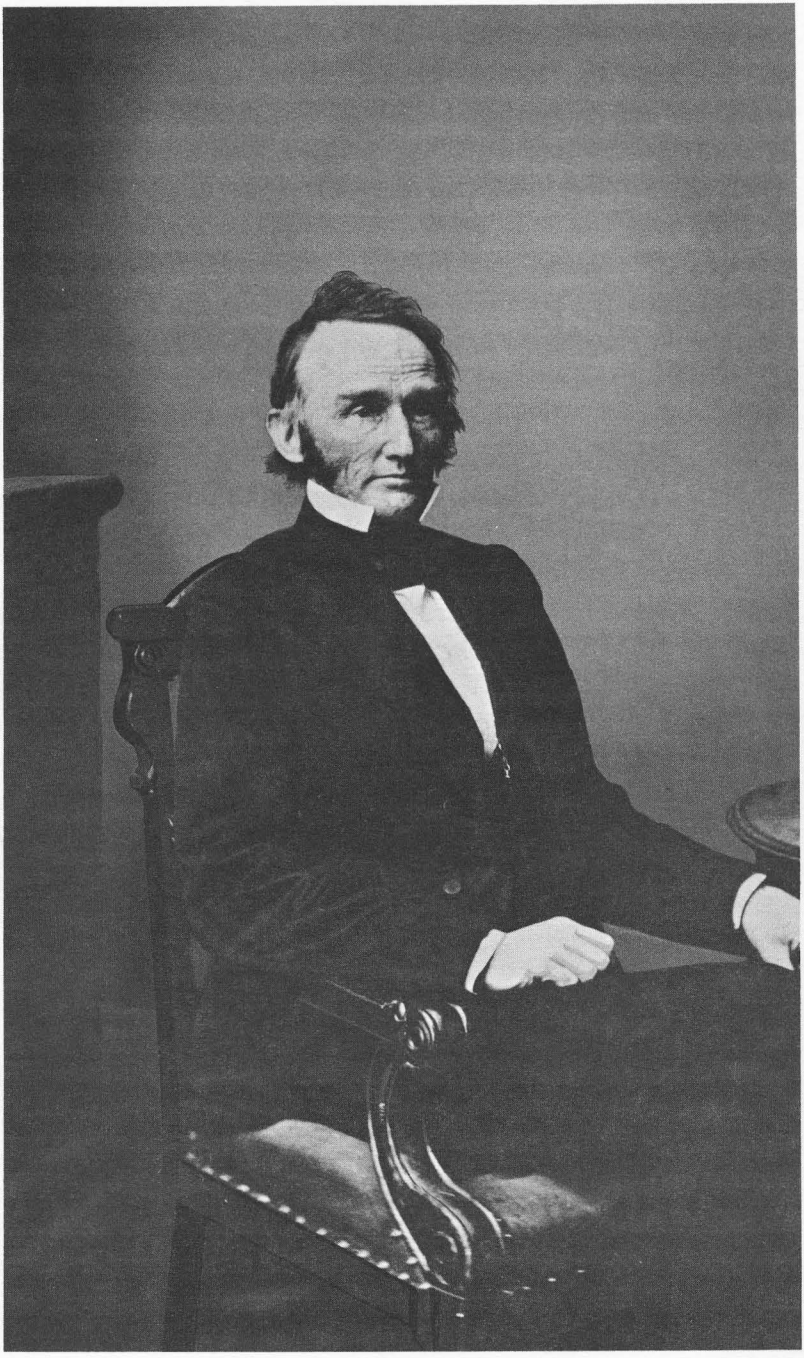


Montgomery Blair

I

THE BLAIR FAMILY

One hundred years ago, Montgomery Blair, Postmaster General in the Cabinet of Abraham Lincoln, dispatched a letter to each foreign government with which the United States had diplomatic relations. He suggested a meeting to ease the problems then plaguing international postal affairs. Blair's letter instigated a conference at Paris in 1863. The Conference paved the way for the formation of the Universal Postal Union, one of the world's oldest, largest, and most firmly established international organizations.

Blair's historic action represents only one of his impressive accomplishments as Postmaster General. The reforms he instituted during his tenure from 1861 to 1864 had a lasting impact on the postal service.

Blair's service as Postmaster General was part of an exciting and extremely productive career. Born in Franklin County, Ky., on May 10, 1813, he was a member of a distinguished and colorful family whose influence in American politics spanned half a century.

Francis Blair

Montgomery was the oldest son of Francis Preston Blair, who was a fiery writer of editorials for a Kentucky journal called *Argus of Western America* before being summoned to Washington by Andrew Jackson to form a new party newspaper.

The elder Blair reached the Capitol almost penniless, with a single frock coat to his name, and with a cut in the side of his head from a carriage upset near Washington. According to James Parton, a biographer of Jackson, ". . . this little man, attired in frock coat and court plaster," went directly to the President's office, where an army officer looked at him with dismay and said, "Mr. Blair, we want stout hearts and sound heads here."

Parton, a man familiar with the best American editors of the era, wrote of Francis Blair:

> If the country had been searched for the express purpose of selecting the man best fitted for the editorship of the proposed organ, no one could have been found whose history, opinions, antipathies, and cast of character so adapted him for the post as Francis P. Blair of Kentucky.

John Rives, his friend, and later partner in the printing firm of Rives & Blair, described him as—

> about five feet, 10 inches tall, and would be full six feet if his brain were on top of his head instead of being in a poll behind it. . . . He looks like a skeleton, lacks but little of being one, and weighed last spring when dressed in thick winter clothing 107 pounds, about 85 of which we suppose was bone, and the other 22 pounds made up of gristle, nerve, and brain . . . flesh he has none.

His appearance notwithstanding, Francis Blair became a close confidant of Jackson, and a member of the famed "Kitchen Cabinet." His enterprises prospered. In addition to the party organ, *The Globe,* he published *The Congressional Globe,* the predecessor of the *Congressional Record,* and he and Rives were elected printers to Congress.

In 1836, he bought the now famous house that bears his name. Across the street from the White House, it had been erected in 1824 by Surgeon General Joseph Lovell.

When Van Buren, the candidate of the Jacksonian Democrats, became president, Blair continued to publish both his papers. Politically wise and with ready access to every manner of information, he was acutely aware of every shift in the political daguerreotype. Although *The Globe* was abolished as the admin-

istration newspaper when Van Buren was defeated for a second term in 1840, Blair still published it as a daily and continued for some little time with the *Congressional Globe.*

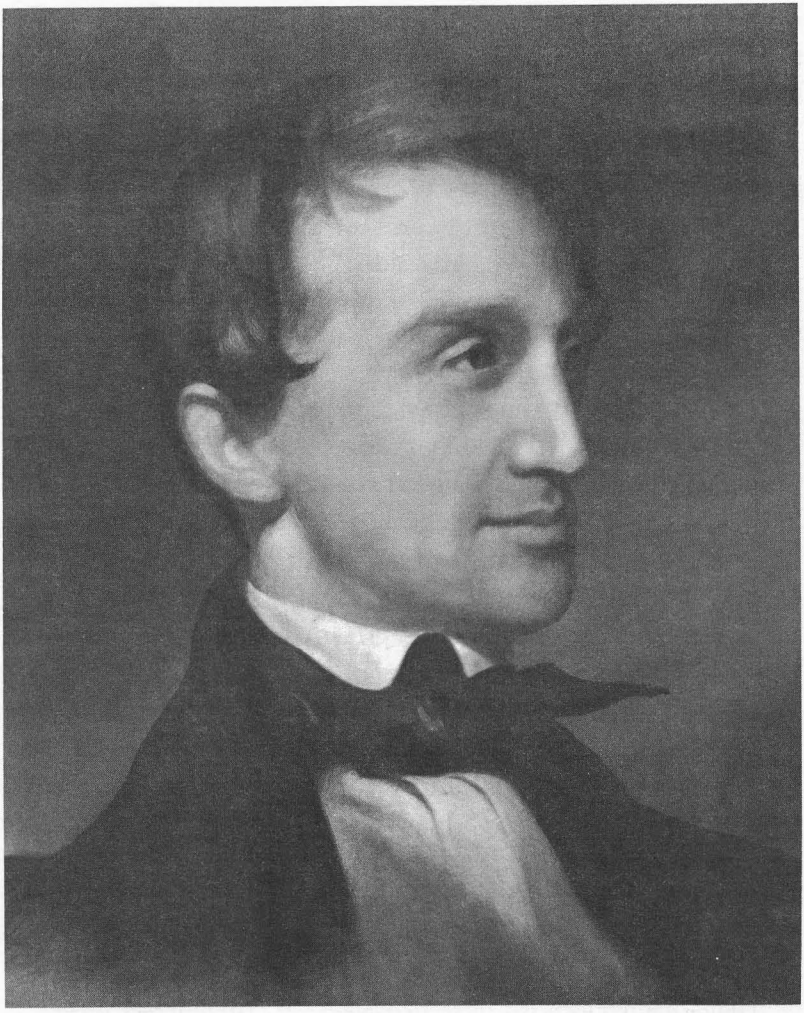
Silver Spring

The story of Francis Blair's acquisition of Silver Spring, the home he built in Montgomery County, Md., is synonymous with the story of the founding of the city of Silver Spring, a populous community in the Washington suburbs.

The Blairs were avid horsemen. Piney Branch and Blair roads in today's Montgomery County follow bridle paths the family cut through the woods in the 19th century. On one ride, one of the Blairs was thrown. The horse galloped on into the woods, finally stopping in a small clearing. Nearby was a spring, gushing sparkling white sand and mica into the bright sunlight. Francis Blair called it "Silver Spring." He eventually acquired an estimated thousand acres of land on all sides of it.

Blair built a rugged, three-story brick house on the land in 1844. The house had 20 rooms, 4 baths (an extraordinary number in those days) and 9 fireplaces with white marble mantels. Lincoln visited Silver Spring often. Ida M. Tarbell in her book, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln,* quotes a grandson of Francis P. Blair on a carefree Lincoln at Silver Spring:

> "During the Civil War, my grandfather . . . lived at Silver Spring, north of Washington . . . a magnificient place. . . . Grandchildren gathered there frequently. . . . Mr. Lincoln drove out to our place quite frequently. We boys for hours at a time played "town ball" on the vast lawn and Mr. Lincoln would join ardently in the sport. I remember vividly how he ran with the children; how long were his strides and how far his coat tails stuck out behind; and how we tried to hit him with the ball as he ran the bases. He entered into the spirit as completely as did any of us and we invariably hailed his coming with delight."



Montgomery Blair, as a young man, from the portrait by Thomas Sully.

Montgomery Blair

Montgomery Blair, with Jackson's aid, was appointed to West Point, where he graduated in 1835. After serving briefly in the Seminole War in Florida, he resigned his Army commission and

moved to St. Louis, Mo., where he studied law with Thomas Hart Benton.

Beginning the practice of law in 1837, Blair became in fairly rapid succession U.S. District Attorney for the State of Missouri, mayor of St. Louis, and judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He also represented the interests of the controversial "Pathfinder," John C. Fremont. Although he preferred civil law and investigation of land cases, he was knowledgeable in the field of corporate law and became counsel for several leading railroads. He learned Spanish in order to represent the natives of the Southwest.

In 1836, Blair married Caroline Rebecca Buckner of Virginia. After her death in 1844, he married Mary Elizabeth Woodbury, daughter of Levi Woodbury, who at various times served as a Senator from New Hampshire, Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of the Treasury, and Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. The couple eventually had four children—three boys and a girl.

Montgomery Blair was tall and gaunt with an aquiline nose and a broad, balding forehead. A man of considerable erudition, he was well versed in Greek, Roman, and European, as well as American, history. Classical, biblical, and mythical allusions sprinkled his writing. Noah Brooks, the newspaperman closest to Lincoln, called him "the best read man in Lincoln's Cabinet."

Blair was also blessed with a logical and ordered mind. His arguments before the courts, and his later speeches as Postmaster General and politician, were clear and cogent. At the same time, he was awkward and hesitant before an audience. His high-pitched voice seemed to irritate listeners. His handwriting was almost indecipherable. Friends often were forced to return his letters because they could not be read.

Blair could be sympathetic, charming, and even courtly. But he was also irascible and easily angered. Noah Brooks once referred to him as "the Stormy Petrel of the Lincoln Cabinet."

In 1852, at the age of 39, Blair left Missouri and came to Washington to join his father. By that time, after considerable nudging on the part of the new President, James K. Polk, the senior Blair had sold his interest in *The Globe* and retired to Silver

Spring. Francis Blair's retirement was more apparent than real, however. He retained his financial interest in the *Congressional Globe* and in the printing firm of Blair & Rives, as well as other investments in Washington, and continued to ride back and forth to the city almost daily.

Falkland

Montgomery moved his family into Blair House and at the same time started building Falkland, a 21-room mansion on a hill overlooking Silver Spring. After Falkland was finished, the family continued to use the house on Pennsylvania Avenue as its townhouse.

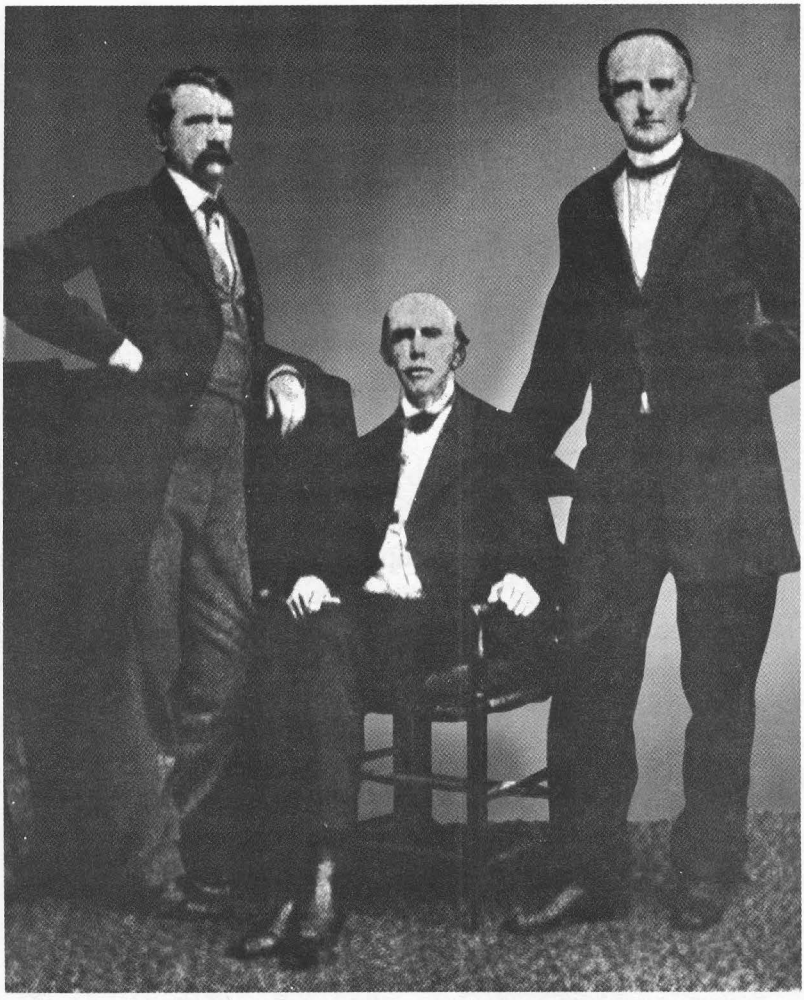
Under the gracious and hospitable younger Mrs. Blair, Blair House continued to be a central social and political gathering place. In the twilight years preceding the Civil War, its lovely portals were shadowed by the powerful and famous—John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, Jefferson Davis, John C. Breckenridge.

The elder Blairs spent their winters in Washington with Montgomery's family. After Francis Blair built an adjoining dwelling for his daughter Betsy and her husband, a cousin of Robert E. Lee, they stayed in Betsy's home.

Although he deferred to the senior Blair for counsel, Montgomery was an independent and strong-willed man, whose fiercely-held views seemed constantly to enmesh him in conflict. He was reckless of personal consequences when what appeared to him to be a question of principle was involved.

Blair Family Politics

The Blairs were free spirits in politics, but usually acted in concert. As Jacksonian Democrats they stood firm in their support of union of the States and the ultimate destruction of slave property.



Francis Blair, Sr., seated, with his two sons, Francis, Jr., and Montgomery.

Francis, Sr., according to Montgomery's son, Gist, owned "numbers of slaves . . . but my father would never own a slave."

They were, however, "border States" people with an understanding of both the North and the South. Moreover, party ties in the mid-19th century were far more casually discarded than they are today.

The family was with Van Buren on the Free Soil bandwagon in 1848 and, along with Van Buren, supported Pierce for President in 1852. They opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 and helped in the attempt to settle Kansas with people from the free States. As the lines between North and South sharpened, they joined in the organization of the Republican Party.

Called "more nearly the founder of the Republican Party than any other man," Francis Blair, Sr., was instrumental in bringing about the nomination of John C. Fremont as the first Republican candidate for President in 1856.

The Dred Scott Case

Montgomery Blair participated in most of the sweeping constitutional cases argued before the Supreme Court in the years preceding the Civil War. He represented Dred Scott in the historic and fateful case which involved the constitutionality of the Missouri Compromise and the legal right of a Negro to become a citizen of the United States.

Writing of the arguments before the Supreme Court, a Washington correspondent described Blair as—

> a close logical reasoner, a man of diligent and careful research, and strong power of thought, but a very poor pleader. His manner is awkward, his gesticulation particularly painful, and his utterance slow and with the appearance of being obstructed. But his argument would read well.

Blair himself expected the Dred Scott decision. He had written to Van Buren earlier: "It seems to be the impression that the opinion of the Court will be adverse to my client and to the power of Congress over the territories." He was correct.

Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, speaking for the majority, ruled that Scott was not a citizen of Missouri and hence could not bring suit in a Federal court. (A Negro who was a descendant of slaves could never become a citizen of the national community, Taney declared. He might be a citizen of a particular State, but the State

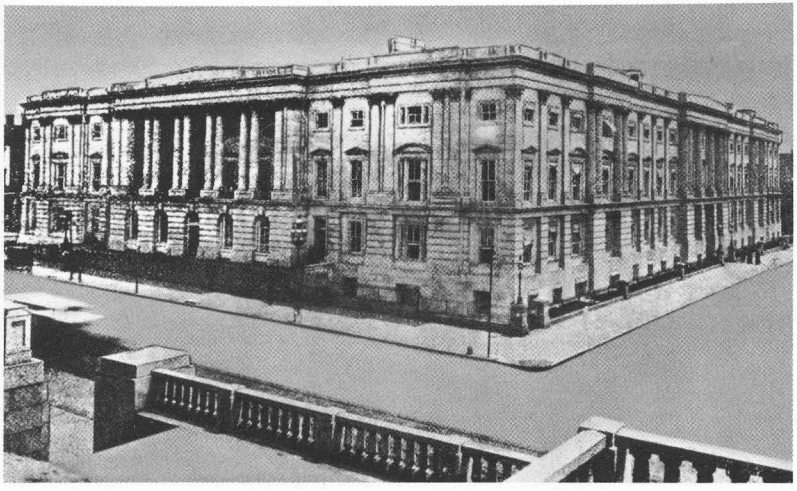
could not give him national status. The Constitution applied only to white men because no State had Negro citizens at the time it was adopted.)

In a collateral, *obiter dictum,* pronouncement with political overtones, the Court ruled that Scott's sojourn in territory where slavery was forbidden by the Missouri Compromise had not affected his status as a slave. Slaves, said Taney, are property, and Congress, consequently, could not pass a law depriving persons in territories of slave property. The Missouri Compromise, therefore, was illegal.

The decision helped to revive the Republican Party, which was languishing for lack of an issue.

In 1859, Blair was asked to defend John Brown, the fanatic who attacked Harper's Ferry in an attempt to make war on slavery. Unable to argue the case personally, he helped secure a fair trial for Brown by procuring counsel and helping prepare his defense.

The Blairs went to the Republican Convention of 1860 hoping to nominate Edward Bates. When their candidate's position became hopeless, they swung behind Lincoln. From that point to his death, their loyalty and devotion to Lincoln were unquestioned.



The building occupied by the Post Office Department from 1841 to 1899.

II

CIVIL WAR WASHINGTON

When Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860, Washington was a small city, with a population of about 100,000. The Washington monument was barely started. There were few public buildings of consequence, excepting the White House, the Treasury, the Smithsonian, and the Post Office building. The Capitol's dome was only half finished. Work on the dome and on the House and Senate wings was to proceed unabated during the war.

The streets were largely unpaved. What paving there was consisted of an overlay of wooden blocks held together by tar. It remained perennially buckled by heat and rain. A stagnant creek lay in the center of the city. In bad weather the mud became almost impenetrable. On bright days, dust swirled high, obscuring the sun. A favorite Washington joke proclaimed that real estate costs were high because it was "for the most part all in the air."

The America of 1860 was a land of one-room schoolhouses, camp meetings, steam calliopes, and cornhusking bees; of the stagecoach, the Pony Express, the Comstock Lode, and "Pike's Peak or Bust"; and of Brigham Young, P. T. Barnum, and Jenny Lind. Typecasting machines, steamboats, revolvers, the telegraph, and anesthesia were new on the scene—items of novelty and wonder.

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Secession

In December of 1860, after it was clear that Lincoln had been elected, seven Southern States voted to secede from the Union. Their withdrawal was based on Lincoln's opposition to slavery, even though Lincoln was not yet committed to fight slavery in those places where it was already legal.

When Horace Greeley, in an editorial titled "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," asked for strong, antislavery measures, Lincoln replied:

> My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it: and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union.

In the muddled political atmosphere preceding the war and in the months after, many Northerners—including the Blairs—believed that colonization was the best solution to the problem of the American Negro.

Montgomery Blair proposed "to provide homes in some country and climate friendly to human life . . . where our free colored population might be established under our patronage and protection as a separate, free, and independent people." A bill was passed and money was appropriated by Congress to send freed slaves to Africa, but the plans were never implemented.

The Lincoln Cabinet

Lincoln's first days in office were chaotic. In picking a Cabinet, Lincoln showed the qualities of a pragmatic politician. He named, among others, William H. Seward, Edward Bates, Salmon P. Chase, and Simon Cameron, all former rivals for the Presidency. By selecting these men, he helped to cement the conflicting factions of the New Republican Party.

Montgomery Blair's office in Blair House.

Selection of a Postmaster General proved difficult. Henry Winter Davis, an influential Marylander, was heavily touted for the office. But Montgomery Blair was also a Marylander, and the Blair family was the most potent political element in both Maryland and Missouri. Lincoln realized their support in these pivotal border States would be indispensable to him. Even before he was elected, he had written Senator Lyman Trumbull of Illinois that Montgomery Blair would probably have a place in his Cabinet. On March 9, 1861, 5 days after Lincoln assumed office, Montgomery Blair was named Postmaster General.

Lee Declines Army Command

In 1861, Virginia-born Robert E. Lee had been an officer in the Army of the United States for 30 years. Uncertain of Lee's stand in the erupting Civil War, the President asked Francis P. Blair,

Sr., to determine where his sympathies lay. On April 18, 1861, the senior Blair invited Colonel Lee to his son's home and there offered him command of the Union Army. Lee courteously declined.

Lincoln's selection of the elder Blair was a logical one. Francis Blair was a slaveowner and a descendant of a prominent Virginia family. His daughter, Elizabeth, was married to a cousin of Robert E. Lee, Samuel Phillips Lee. Blair was, moreover, one of the few persons Lincoln turned to for political advice in those early days of his first administration. He was one of only three people who were shown Lincoln's first inaugural address before it was given.

The story of the Lee interview at Blair House became distorted over the years. In 1868, General Lee sent his own version of the meeting to Senator Reverdy Johnson of Maryland. He affirmed that he had talked with no one but Francis P. Blair—

> at his invitation and, as I understood, at the instance of President Lincoln. After listening to his remarks, I declined the offer he made me, to take command of the Army that was to be brought into the field; stating, as candidly and courteously as I could, that, though opposed to secession and deprecating war, I could take no part in an invasion of the Southern States. I went directly from the interview with Mr. Blair to the office of General Scott, told him of the proposition that had been made to me, and my decision.

Two days later, Lee resigned his commission in the Army of the United States. He was one of 284 officers of the U.S. Army who joined the Confederate forces after November 1, 1860.

Post Office Department

The Department Montgomery Blair took over was archaic, inefficient, and chronically riddled with troubles. Personnel were of doubtful loyalty. During the years preceding secession, congressional legislation had been turbulent and reckless. The Overland Mail was an arrant extravagence. The secessionist States had

been acting independently of the Government for months and were appropriating receipts and supplies. There were no official letterboxes on the streets, except in a few larger cities, no mail railway cars, and free delivery did not exist. There was no money order system and little uniformity in international mail procedures. The system of registering letters had been pronounced a failure by Blair's predecessor, Postmaster General Joseph Holt. The Department was running deeply into debt. The postal deficit in 1860 ran to about 40 percent of the estimated budget.

The Post Office Department in Washington shared its building at 8th and E Streets NW. with the Commissary General. The building was poorly lit and badly equipped. The roof leaked, and rain had stained the walls and ruined the materials and records stacked on the top floor.

Patronage

Blair—like the President and other Cabinet members—was unable to move immediately into the problems of his Department, because he was importuned and besieged at every turn by jobseekers. Washington had become Mecca for every politician, major and minor, from everywhere in the Nation. Gustavus Vasa Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy and a brother-in-law of Montgomery Blair's wife, wrote in a letter home:

> Blair is nearly run to death with office seekers. They left him at 2 this morning and commenced at 8 this morning.

Many stories have filtered down to us about Lincoln's patronage problems. One well-known anecdote has Lincoln suggesting, during a bout with influenza, that all the job petitioners be brought to him. "I have something now I can give to each of them," he said. Another tells of a day when he looked particularly harassed and was asked, sympathetically, if there were bad news from Fort Sumter. "Oh, no," Lincoln replied, "it's the Post Office at Bald'insville." (He was referring to the mythical hometown

of the popular humorist Artemus Ward.) Charles Francis Adams, his Ambassador to England, confessed himself somewhat surprised on his first interview with the President to have Lincoln discuss the Chicago post office appointment rather than foreign policy.

On July 26, 1861, President Lincoln wrote a letter to his friend, Henry C. Whitney:

> I have troubles enough; when I last saw you, I was having little troubles; they filled my mind full; since then I have big troubles and they can do no more—what do you think has annoyed me more than any one thing?. . . . Now, I tell you; the fight over two post offices—one at our Bloomington (Illinois) and the other in Pennsylvania. That is the thing that is troubling me most.

Fort Sumter

The seekers of political balm and spoils were so persistent that Lincoln found it difficult to devote sufficient time to the formidable problems confronting him. In the forefront of these was the decision on whether to relieve Fort Sumter. Seward led a Cabinet majority in recommending that it be abandoned. Montgomery Blair, however, had long favored the provisioning of the fort and now threatened to resign if it were not reinforced. Lincoln finally ordered that supplies be carried to Charleston Harbor. Although they reached Sumter too late, public opinion was aroused, and Seward's peace policy defeated.

Blair was accused on many occasions of meddling with matters rightfully belonging to the War Office. John A. Kasson, First Assistant Postmaster General under Blair, and later a Member of the House of Representatives, defended him on this point:

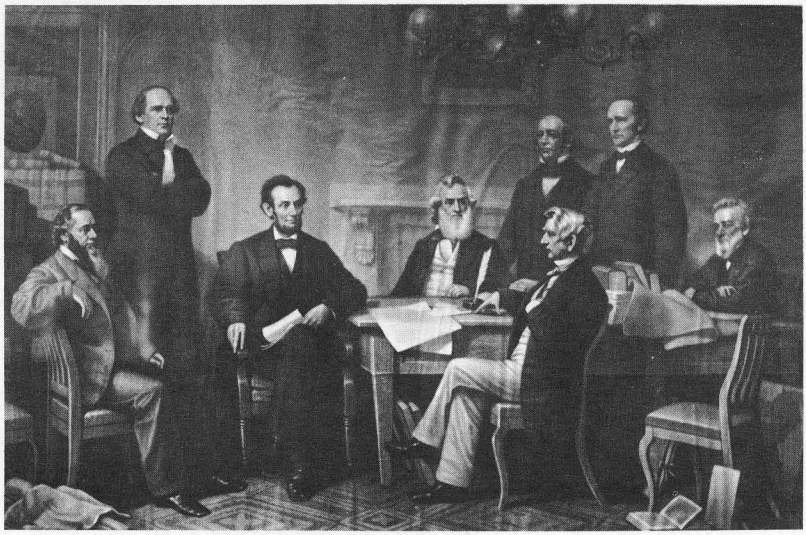
> Mr. Blair, while holding himself aloof as far as possible from the factional dissentions (sic) in the Cabinet, was generally opposed both to Seward and to Chase. Of course, he was much interested in the progress of the war, in which his brother, Frank Blair, was a prominent officer, but he did not interfere with questions relating to the management of the Army.

Blair took the minority view on at least three other occasions in 1861–62. When the Confederates, James M. Mason and John Slidell, were removed from the British ship, the *Trent,* by Union action, Blair was one of the few members of the Cabinet who spoke out against the move. Despite Northern jubilance, he regarded it as a breach of international law and, fearing a break between the United States and England, thought the Confederates should be returned to England.

Later, when the people west of the Blue Ridge voted to secede from Virginia and a bill was submitted for admission of a new State of West Virginia, Lincoln asked each member of the Cabinet to give a written opinion on the question. Blair opposed the admission on the grounds that Virginia had not legally given consent to the secession, a consistent stand since he was opposed to secession in any form. Nonetheless, he was widely criticized and accused of being a "Democrat" and a "border" statesman.

Emancipation Proclamation

Finally, when Lincoln, in July of 1862, read to the Cabinet his proposed proclamation to free the slaves in the seceded territory on a certain date, Blair went further than most of the Cabinet in declaring the timing inappropriate. He was afraid of the effect the proclamation would have on the congressional elections. After the victory at Antietam, Lincoln decided the time was auspicious, and on September 22 again read his proclamation to the Cabinet. At this point, Montgomery Blair asked permission to put forth his objections in writing, stating he was emancipationist in principle but "was afraid of the influence of the proclamation on the border States and on the Army." The following day he wrote a note to Lincoln saying that as his objections were "only to the time of the act, he would not file them lest they should be subject to misconstruction." His fears, however, were apparently well founded, for in the elections of 1862, the Republicans almost lost control of the House of Representatives.



Lincoln's Cabinet
From an original engraving now hanging in Blair House (left to right): 1. Edwin Stanton, *Secretary of Navy;* 2. Salmon P. Chase, *Secretary of Treasury;* 3. President Lincoln; 4. Gideon Welles, *Secretary of Navy;* 5. (standing) Caleb B. Smith, *Secretary of Interior;* 6. (seated) William Seward, *Secretary of State;* 7. (standing) Montgomery Blair, *Postmaster General;* 8. (seated) Edward Bates, *Attorney General.*

Except from Henry Winter Davis, who throughout his lifetime remained an implacable enemy, Montgomery's appointment as Postmaster General brought little initial hostility. The *Boston Courier* summarized public opinion on the appointment in an editorial on March 8, 1861:

> Whatever difference of opinion may exist in his party as to his political tendencies or affinities, all who have made the acquaintance of Judge Blair will accord to him talents of the first order, profound learning as a jurist, the most energetic industry and perseverance in whatever he undertakes, and a moral character entirely without reproach.

III

POSTAL REFORMS

As soon as the hordes of patronage seekers were more or less dissipated, Blair began to move vigorously toward a more efficient and effective postal organization. Almost immediately, he asked the Secretary of the Treasury for $500,000 to apply to overdue salaries.

Blair addressed himself to the tricky question of post offices in the Confederate States. Although the secessionist States had been illegally obtaining supplies and equipment for some time in preparation for the eventuality of war, it was not until May 1861 that a Confederate Post Office Department was formally established under John H. Reagan of Tennessee. Mail service in the Southern States had broken down almost entirely by this time, but Postmaster General Blair, on May 31, 1861, issued a formal order suspending postal service in the insurrectionary States. He had delayed, he wrote to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, because "the mails alone afforded the means of diffusing any correct information among the people of the South and disabusing their minds of the prevalent errors which the conspirators had availed themselves of."

Blair made his personnel take a loyalty oath which, even then, was not a popular institution. He describes his action in the Postmaster General's Annual Report of 1861:

> Soon after the commencement of my term of office the country felt the shock of internecine arms. In view of the great crime attempted against the existence of the nation, it became the duty of this department in common with other departments of the government, to put forth all its energies to prevent the consummation

of that crime. By the existing laws all postmasters and mail carriers, and all other persons engaged in handling the mails of the United States, or its clerical service, were required to take the oath of allegiance to this government, as well as for the faithful performance of their duties. Whenever it was made apparent by their declarations or by their conduct that there was a practical repudiation of the obligation of this oath, I ordered a removal from the office in one case and the deprivation of contract in the other. Not only was it unsafe to intrust the transportation of the mails to a person who refused to recognize the sanctions of an oath, but to continue payment of public money to the enemies of the government and their allies, was to give direct aid and comfort to treason in arms.

In another directive which created a good deal of controversy, Blair ordered 12 disloyal newspapers excluded from the mails. He defended his move in the same Annual Report:

> The freedom of the press is secured by high constitutional sanction. But it is freedom and not license that is guaranteed. It is to be used only for lawful purposes. It cannot aim blows at the existence of the government, the Constitution, and the Union, and at the same time claim its protection. . . . While, therefore, this department neither enjoyed nor claimed the power to suppress such treasonable publications, but left them free to publish what they pleased, it could not be called upon to give them circulation. It could not and would not interfere with the freedom secured by law, but it could and did obstruct the dissemination of that license which was without the pale of the Constitution and law.

Blair acted quickly to avoid the use of Federal stamps by the Southern States. He invalidated all existing stamps and issued a new series by August 15. He also appointed post office inspectors to detect disloyal postmasters in the loyal States.

Army Mail Service

Blair next moved to meet the unprecedented demands on mail service caused by the Army. A small rural post office, manned only by a postmaster, or at most by a postmaster and one or two clerks, would suddenly find itself deluged by thousands of

soldiers. Blair worked out a plan which gave every regiment its own postmaster who received and distributed the mail, sold postage stamps and money orders, and forwarded letters. Later, it was also possible for a soldier to write home without paying for the postage. The postage was collected from the person receiving the letter. Pressure was placed on the Postmaster General to supply free stamps to officers, but Blair refused to discriminate between them and enlisted men.

Because postmen were exempt from military service, many men seemed to discover overnight that their lifetime ambition lay in carrying the mail. The humorist, Artemus Ward, paid a visit to his mythical home at "Bald'insville" and wrote a folksy letter to his readers:

> I hadn't no sooner sot down on the piazzy of the tavoun than I saw sixteen solitary hossmen, ridin' four abreast, wendin' their way up the street.
>
> What's them? Is it calvary?
>
> "That," said the landlord, "is the stage. Sixteen ablebodied citizens has lately bought the stage line 'tween here and Scotsburg. That's them. They're stage drivers. Stage drivers is exempt."
>
> I saw that each stage driver carried a letter in his left hand.
>
> "The mail is hevy today," said the landlord. "Gin'rally they don't have more'n half a dozen letters between 'm. Today they've got one apiece! Bile my lights and liver!"
>
> And the passengers?
>
> "There ain't any, skacely, now-days," said the landlord, "and what few there is, very much prefer to walk, the roads is so rough."

Bootleggers of mail between the Union and the rebellious States were not uncommon. One of the most notorious was Captain Absalom Grimes of Missouri. He would sneak across the dividing line between the States carrying letters in his carpetbag. Caught twice, he was sentenced to death both times. The first time he escaped by tunneling under his prison wall. The second time he was pardoned by Lincoln, who constantly exasperated Secretary of War Stanton by his habit of pardoning prisoners of war or violaters of military discipline.

Reduction of Postal Deficit

Blair initiated a wide array of reforms to improve the financial health of the Post Office Department. He discontinued unnecessary post offices; he stringently enforced the prepayment of postage; he did away with the fraudulent reuse of stamps with washed-out cancellations by promoting the use of a new indelible ink for all cancellations. At the same time, he began to experiment with wood and steel canceling devices in an effort to eliminate cancellations by hand. When he left office, several canceling machines were under construction.

Blair successfully introduced other major changes. He withdrew the franking privilege from postmasters, a right that had been much abused. He made sure that mail contracts, up to then given out indiscriminately, were granted to the lowest bidders. In addition, he repeatedly attacked the extortionate rates demanded by railroad contractors, and finally won reductions.

In his 1862 Annual Report, Blair wrote:

> It is my purpose to adhere firmly to my determination to displace incompetency and indifference wherever found in official position under my control, without any discrimination in favor of appointments which I may myself have made under misinformation of facts. The postal business must be conducted, if successful, upon the same principles which control the operations of the upright and sagacious man of business. The department should adhere to those officers who have administrative talents and are faithful to its interests; and should remove those who take no interest in the efficiency of its service. The number of its appointed officers and employes is so great, and dispersed over so large a territory, that the Postmaster General must always depend upon the cooperation of the public, and particularly of the official advisers of the department, in order to secure this result.

In 1863, Congress acted on Blair's suggestion to divide mail into three separate classes. A standard rate was also set by Congress for letter postage weighing up to one-half ounce. The purpose of this law was to establish a uniform rate of postage for letters, regardless of the distance transmitted.

Blair urgently recommended that fixed salaries be paid to postmasters instead of commissions. He argued that salaries would not only save the Government money, but would also improve service. In 1864, as a result of his steady prodding, postmasters were divided into five salary classifications.

These and other reforms, as well as Blair's administrative talents, led to considerable financial savings. By 1863, Blair had reduced the 1860 deficit of $5,656,705 to a deficit of only $120,000. When he resigned in 1864, the Department was largely self-sustaining and well on its way to the 1865 surplus of $161,000.

Free Delivery

As early as 1825, Congress provided for delivery of letters by private carriers. Two cents were charged to the recipient. Later, newspapers were delivered at one-half cent each. The system, known as the "penny post," operated only in large cities. Where the "penny post" was not in use, mail had to be picked up at the delivery window of the local post office. Picking up one's mail could be a long and vexing chore. Queues of people often snaked out for long distances. In some areas, private carriers would, for a fee, transmit letters from tin boxes placed at strategic points on the streets. But, in the absence of locks or keys, the boxes were almost as often emptied by thieves as by the contractors.

In his second Annual Report, Blair urged the abolishment of the "penny post" and the inauguration of a system of free delivery in cities. He recommended that postal employees carry letters to residence or business addresses, that receiving boxes be set up at strategic points, and that deliveries be made as often as the public convenience might demand.

At Blair's instigation a law providing for free delivery of city mail was passed. It went into operation in July of 1863 in 49 large post offices. Four hundred ninety-nine carriers delivered the mail. Their total annual compensation is recorded as $330,680.

Blair believed that good service and the convenience of the

public should in all instances be the primary consideration of the Post Office Department. He felt that people were willing to pay for efficient mail delivery. He wrote that "it may be regarded as an axiom in postal affairs, that certainty, frequency, and facility of communication influence the amount of correspondence more than any variations in a moderate tariff."

Money Order System

The exigencies of war made Blair aware of the need for a safe way for soldiers to send money. Soon afterward, he realized that the general public had equal need for a sound way to transmit money. His Annual Report of 1862 contained the following:

> Great efforts have been made to give security to the mails. New and improved locks have been put into service, a stricter surveillance has been exercised over the affairs and agents of this department; negligence has been punished and diligence rewarded . . . But the mails . . . continue to be subject to depredations . . . It is, in my opinion, very desirable, . . . that money should be as far as practicable excluded from the mails. With this view I recommend:
>
> 1. The adoption of a money order system.
> 2. A greatly increased rate upon registered letters, approximating the charges imposed by other parties engaged in the transport of such packages.
> 3. That all letters known to contain money shall be charged with registry postage.

Blair renewed his recommendations the following year. In May, 1864, Congress authorized the Postmaster General to establish a uniform money order system at all post offices he deemed suitable. At the same time, by means of higher fees, mandatory return receipts, and rigid accountability from employees, Blair revived the faltering registration system.

Railway Postal Service

Another of Blair's accomplishments was to recast the railway postal service. When Blair took office, procedures for the distribution of mail carried by railway were in a state of pandemonium. Details were largely left to the whims of postmasters and clerks. They were guided only by vague rules and these they applied in a manner that seemed occult to all but the initiated.

A bag of letters would be stopped here and there, and handled and rehandled at what were called distributing post offices. Sometimes a letter was shipped to a point beyond its destination and then returned again. The wayward and irregular pattern of distribution often delayed delivery for days.

To bring a halt to this situation, Blair introduced the concept of the railway post office—the railroad car in which mail is sorted and distributed en route.

The first railway post office was established on an experimental basis in 1862 on the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad. The idea proved successful and, in February 1864, Blair ordered railway post office cars built for operation between New York, Cincinnati, and Cleveland. That same year a traveling post office was put in regular service on the Chicago & Northwestern Railway. The traveling post office was authorized by law in 1865 and soon became an essential cog in the mail delivery mechanism.

IV

THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

Of all Blair's work as Postmaster General, none has had as wide and as lasting an impact on world communications as his efforts to bring uniformity to international mail. In 1862, the United States had separate bilateral postal agreements with each of eight foreign governments. Rates were arrived at via a complex formula which took account of (1) domestic rates in the United States; (2) "sea postage" for maritime transport; (3) the transit rate assessed by each country through which the article passed; and (4) domestic rates in the country of delivery.

Sea postage and transit rates were based on the route and the nationality of the vessels carrying the mail. A letter sent to Austria might be 15, 30 or 42 cents per half ounce, depending on whether the vessel sailed directly to Bremen or Hamburg or traveled by way of England or France. Five routes were possible to Greece, Turkey, Egypt, or Hong Kong; four to Germany and Switzerland; and three to Denmark, Holland, Sweden, and Norway. An article to Australia might travel by any one of six routes, with postage varying from 5 cents to $1.02 per half ounce.

Adding to the confusion of rates and routes were variations in units of weight (ounce, gramme, zolloth, etc.), in the progression of rates and weights, and in maximum weights and thicknesses. Most onerous of all was the complicated accounting system needed to cover receipts, which ranged from an equal division among the countries involved, to almost every conceivable fractional division.

Blair wrote in his 1862 Annual Report:

> Our international mail system is extremely loose and defective . . . The whole foreign system, as now established, is too complex to be readily understood by postmasters, and many mistakes and unfortunate delays arise from its complexity. I had little hope of remedying these evils except by a general congress of postal representatives, practically acquainted with their respective systems, and predisposed to facilitate the international, social, and commercial correspondence, by which national prosperity is so much affected.
>
> Accordingly, I opened a correspondence through the State Department. . . . Several replies have been received, all of which are favorable, and consent to the project.

Among the subjects Blair listed for consideration by the Conference were a uniform standard weight; uniformity of rates to destination, by whatever route of transit; uniform conditions of prepayment; and the retention of postage by the nation collecting it.

On May 11, 1863, as a direct consequence of Blair's letter, delegates from Austria, Belgium, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Great Britain, the Hanseatic Cities, Holland, Italy, Portugal, Prussia, the Sandwich Islands, Spain, and Switzerland assembled in Paris. John A. Kasson, who represented the United States, estimated that the nations represented had a total population of over 400 million and sent nineteen-twentieths of the world's correspondence.

Monsieur E. Vandal, the Director General of the French Posts, was elected president of the Conference and gave the opening address. He stated that since the delegates were not empowered to settle matters that belonged in the domain of diplomacy, the Conference could not arrive at any binding agreements. It was planned to enunciate only general principles which might at a later time be made more definitive. Nevertheless, by the time deliberations were completed on June 8, the Conference had agreed on 31 articles.

In the decade following the Conference, the United States, Switzerland, Belgium, and Italy, among others, followed the articles of the Conference in new postal agreements. Under

Blair's direction, the United States also revised existing postal arrangements to bring them into accord with the principles agreed upon at the convention.

Unhappily, most of the changes dealt with the reduction of rates, and lack of uniformity and complicated accounting procedures continued. But the move to reform begun in Paris in 1863 continued.

Ten years after the Conference, at Germany's suggestion, the Government of the Swiss Confederation invited the European countries, the United States, and Egypt to send representatives to a new Postal Congress in Berne. Since Russia was unwilling to come until she had observed the effects of recent postal conventions, the meeting was postponed until 1874.

The work of the first Postal Congress, which assembled at Berne on September 15, 1874, with a representation from 22 states, was revolutionary. The following principles were adopted:

1. That a common postal territory, regulated by a single treaty, should be accepted internationally.
2. That every country should guarantee to every other country the right of transit of mail by land or sea.
3. That the burden of providing for the conveyance of mails should rest with the country of origin; that all intermediate services used by such country be paid for at fixed rates; and
4. That each country should keep all of its postage collections, on both prepaid and unpaid correspondence, so as to sweep away the great mass of detailed international accounts.

The treaty incorporating these principles, signed at Berne on October 9, 1874, founded what was first called the General Postal Union. Lands beyond Europe, with the exception of Asiatic Russia and Turkey, Egypt, and the United States, were not covered.

In 1878, a second full Congress, held at Paris, revised the treaty to admit any country, state, or colony that would give assurance of carrying out the stipulations of the convention. The Union was then renamed the Universal Postal Union.

The rules to which the member countries conform are set out in a convention, or international treaty. Congresses are held every 5 years to reexamine the convention and determine what changes are necessary or desirable in the light of economic or technical developments. A special Congress of the Union can be convened if requested by two-thirds of the member countries. In this way, international postal rules are kept abreast of changing circumstances.

In the Annual Report of 1863, Postmaster General Blair concluded his remarks on the first Paris Conference with the following paragraph:

> I deem it proper . . . to make prominent the fact that the public owes the suggestion to invite this International Conference to the Honorable John A. Kasson, who represented our government in it with such zeal and ability as to command the thanks and warm approval of his associates. I do not doubt that important and lasting advantages are to flow from this Conference, due in a great degree to his assiduity, practical ability, and earnestness in the cause of progress.

Kasson, in turn, referred to this tribute as an indication of the high sense of honor which governed Postmaster General Blair and added:

> This is the only instance known to me when a Cabinet member has acknowledged in a regular official report the credit due to a subordinate; and his tribute was rendered, also, after I had ceased to be a member of his department.

V

BLAIR, THE POLITICIAN

In the initial years of Lincoln's Presidency the Blair family was a preponderant force in the administration. Both Montgomery Blair and his father were high among Lincoln's advisers. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles wrote in his diary:

> On important questions, Blair is as potent with the President as either Seward or Chase, and sometimes I think is equal to both. With some egotism, Blair has great good sense, a better knowledge and estimate of military men than either or both the others, and I think is possessed of more solid, reliable administrative ability.

William Howard Russell, Washington correspondent of the London *Times,* sent a dispatch on the weight carried by Lincoln's Postmaster General:

> Mr. Blair, the Postmaster General, is a person of much greater influence than his position would indicate. He has the reputation of being one of the most determined Representatives in the Ministry. . . . He is a tall, lean man, with a hard, Scotch, practical-looking head . . . an anvil for ideas to be hammered on. His eyes are small and deeply set . . . and he speaks with caution, as though he weighed every word before.

The Republican Radicals

By 1862, the Republican Party had split into two major factions. The disposition of Southern territory and property at war's end had already become a bitter issue. The Blairs led the conservative faction which favored a gradual emancipation of slaves with

compensation. The Radicals, of whom Henry Winter Davis was the most prominent member, advocated immediate emancipation.

Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts declared in the *Atlantic Monthly* of October 1863 that the seceded States had forfeited all rights under the Constitution, and that Congress should assume jurisdiction over them. Montgomery Blair replied to Sumner in a speech at Rockville, Md., on October 3, 1863. Employing strong language, Blair warned of the dangers of adopting a policy which would turn the South into a conquered territory. He attacked the "ultra" abolitionists, declared that reconstruction was the job of the Executive, not of a "radical" Congress, and that the non-slave-holding whites of the South should be propitiated. The speech created something of a sensation. It drew a storm of angry protests from Radicals all over the North and amassed a host of enemies for the Postmaster General.

A few days later, Blair inquired of the President whether his brother, Frank, should stay in the Army or resign his generalcy to take his seat in Congress. Lincoln answered in writing on November 2, 1863:

> My Dear Sir: Some days ago I understood you to say that your brother, General Frank Blair, desired to be guided by my wishes as to whether he will occupy his seat in Congress or remain in the field. My wish then is compounded of what I believe will be best for the country, and it is, that he will come here, put his military commission in my hands, take his seat, go into caucus with our friends, abide the nominations, help elect the nominees, and thus aid to organize a House of Representatives, which will really support the government in the war. If the result shall be the election of himself as speaker, let him serve in that position. If not let him retake his commission and return to the army for the country.
>
> . . . He is young yet . . . . He is rising in military skill and usefulness. His recent appointment to the command of a corps by one so competent to judge as General Sherman proves this. . . . In that line he can serve both the country and himself more profitably than he could as a member of Congress upon the floor.

> The foregoing is what I would say if Frank Blair were my brother instead of yours.

Frank Blair, however, failed to reach Washington in time to help organize Congress, and when he did arrive did not resign his commission. Congressional enemies of the Blair family suspected some kind of intrigue. They demanded to know whether he could legally hold a seat in Congress while a major general in the Army. When Senator Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania introduced a resolution asking Lincoln to report on Frank Blair's dual capacity, Lincoln obligingly forwarded a complete report of his agreements with the Blairs. The report failed to still the criticism and Frank Blair was hotly denounced in the House for his opposition to immediate emancipation.

On February 27, 1864, Frank Blair lost his temper and delivered an angry tirade on the House floor against the Radicals. The latter retorted with the demand that Lincoln dismiss Montgomery Blair to demonstrate that he was not in sympathy with the sentiments voiced by the Postmaster General's brother.

Montgomery Blair's own tactlessness, blunt speech, and strong opinions had long since alienated many of his Cabinet colleagues. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, who sided with the Blairs, felt compelled to defend them in a letter to his son:

> The Blairs were all early emancipationists, though Southern men—

he wrote.

> Frank took the bull by the horns in Missouri and Montgomery and his father here (Washington) and in Maryland. They broke the ice, they fought the battle for 10 years at least before those who now claim to be stronger emancipationists than the Blairs. Henry Davis was a Know-Nothing and opposing the Blairs only a short time ago. But Davis now claims to go further than the Blairs.

During the first half of 1864, the war was going badly. In Virginia, Grant was losing thousands of men trying to take Richmond. Hospitals in Washington were bulging with the wounded and dying. The Treasury was empty and the price of gold was

mounting. Lincoln was forced to draft a half million men to fill an Army depleted by lack of volunteers. News of the Copperhead Rebellion in Ohio was coupled with increasingly rabid attacks on the President in the press.

Opposition to Blair

Reconstruction seemed the bitterest issue of all. Senator Benjamin Wade of Ohio joined Henry Davis in sponsoring a bill to put Reconstruction under the jurisdiction of Congress. Lincoln pocket-vetoed the bill, and issued a proclamation stating his reasons. Wade and Davis, in turn, vehemently attacked the President in the Wade-Davis Manifesto, which denounced Lincoln's reconstruction policy and painted him as a would-be dictator.

One of the Blair family's most potent enemies, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase, was known to have strong presidential ambitions. After a quarrel with the President over a political appointment, Chase carried out a longstanding threat and resigned. To his amazement and chagrin, Lincoln accepted the resignation. Furious, he blamed the Blairs and claimed Lincoln was a tool for the Blair family.

John Hay, the President's secretary, knew Lincoln was nobody's tool. He wrote:

> The Old Man sits here and wields like a backwoods Jupiter the bolts of war and the machinery of government with a hand especially steady and equally firm. I do not know now whether the nation is worthy of him for another term. I know the people want him. . . . But the politicians are strong yet and he is not their "kind of cat."

Hay recounts almost daily visits to the President by Radicals railing against the Postmaster General. One such visitor was Thaddeus Stevens, the militant Senator from Pennsylvania. Lincoln answered Stevens' request to fire Blair in writing:

> Mr. Stevens, I am very sorry to be compelled to deny your request to make such a promise. . . . I confess that I desire to be re-elected. God knows I do not want the labor and responsibility

of the office for another four years. But I have the common pride of humanity to wish my past four years' administration endorsed; and besides I honestly believe that I can better serve the nation in its need and peril than any new man could possibly do. I want to finish this job of putting down the rebellion, and restoring peace and prosperity to the country. But I would have the courage to refuse the office rather than to accept on such disgraceful terms as really not to be President after I am elected.

Early's Raid

The cleft in the Republican Party widened during the spring and early summer of 1864. Lincoln was ready to admit defeat in the coming November election. Then in July, Confederate General Jubal Early led his raiders down Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and invaded Maryland. In his incursions through the State, he exacted ransoms of $10,000 from Hagerstown and $200,000 from Frederick. On the night of July 10, after a sharp skirmish with Union cavalry, he camped at Rockville. The following day, he continued to march toward the Washington fortifications. The only troops defending the city and nearby Fort Stevens were convalescents of the Army of the Potomac, a few Regulars, and a small militia of Government employees and citizens. Had Early attacked Fort Stevens immediately, he might have captured Washington.

Early chose instead to let his troops drink and rest on Francis Blair's estate at Silver Spring. On the night of the 11th, he set up headquarters at Falkland, the home of the Postmaster General. Early's second in command, John C. Breckinridge, a relative of the Blairs and once a frequent visitor at Silver Spring, used the home of the elder Blair. Drinking was not confined to Silver Spring water. Montgomery Blair's son, Gist, gives a graphic account of why "Too Late" Early and his troops tarried at Silver Spring that night:

> No history of Silver Spring would be complete without mention of the famous barrel of bourbon whiskey which lay in the cellar, and when powder and shot could not save the Capitol at Washing-

ton, it did. The officers of the Confederates made their headquarters at the old house, which is scarcely seven miles from this city (Washington) and proceeded to drink up as much of it as they could. They also found dresses and clothes, . . . dressed up as women, amused themselves dancing and drinking and, instead of pushing through Fort Stevens that afternoon when few, if any, soldiers were on guard, remained at Silver Spring until morning. The Sixth Massachusetts arrived the following day and Washington was saved. General Early burned my father's house, known as Falkland, adjoining that of Silver Spring. It was a total loss, because, although insured, it was not insured against the public enemy.

According to Gist Blair, General Early said later in an interview:

> . . . some of my troops were very determined to destroy the house of Mr. Francis P. Blair and had actually removed some of the furniture, probably supposing it to belong to his son, a member of the Federal Cabinet. As soon as I came up, I immediately stopped the proceeding and compelled the men to return every article so far as I knew and placed a guard to protect it. The house of his son, Montgomery Blair, a member of the Cabinet, was subjected to a different rule for obvious reasons.

Lincoln rode to Fort Stevens and watched the fighting from horseback. He kept edging to the front of the lines and had to be almost forcibly removed from his horse by the worried commandant and told to stay behind the fortifications. Even when prone, he kept popping up to peer into the distance and see what was going on.

After his defeat at Fort Stevens on July 12 by General Horatio Wright's 6th Army, Early abandoned his plan to capture Washington. Falkland was burned out, but Silver Spring suffered relatively little damage. Francis Blair was concerned mainly with the removal of papers consigned to him on the death of Andrew Jackson and removed from the house by the Confederates. The papers were returned to the Blairs some years later and are now in the Library of Congress.

Montgomery Blair was convinced that bungling at the War Department made possible the burning of his Silver Spring home

Ruins of Montgomery Blair's house burned by the Confederate soldiers.

and the almost successful raid on Washington. He criticized Secretary of War Stanton and General Henry Halleck, Grant's Chief of Staff, and was quoted as saying that "poltroons and cowards" manned the War Department. Shortly afterward, Stanton

presented Lincoln with a letter from Halleck demanding Blair's dismissal. Lincoln read his reply to the whole Cabinet:

> Whether the remarks were made, I do not know . . . but I do not consider what may have hastily been said in a moment of vexation at so severe a loss is sufficient ground for so grave a step. Besides this, truth is generally the best vindication against slander. I propose continuing to be myself the judge as to when a member of the Cabinet shall be dismissed.

Resignation of Blair

During the succeeding months, heavy pressure to discard the Postmaster General continued to be exerted on the President. In September, Lincoln met with Senator Zachariah Chandler of Michigan. Chandler said he could patch up the deep rifts in the party if the President would remove Blair. It is not known whether Lincoln committed himself. In the days that followed, however, Senator Wade and Henry Davis promised Chandler to support the party ticket. Salmon Chase also agreed to campaign for Lincoln, and John C. Fremont, another important presidential aspirant, removed his name from the race. On September 23, President Lincoln wrote to Blair:

> My Dear Sir: You have generously said to me, more than once, that whenever your resignation could be a relief to me, it was at my disposal. The time has come. You very well know that this proceeds from no dissatisfaction of mine with you personally or officially. Your uniform kindness has been unsurpassed by that of any other friend, and while it is true that the war does not so greatly add to the difficulties of your department as to those of some others, it is yet much to say, as I most truly can, that in the three years and a half during which you have administered the General Post Office, I remember no single complaint against you in connection therewith.
>
> Yours, as ever,
>
> A. LINCOLN.

Blair immediately handed in his resignation. On the same day he wrote a letter to his wife, who was visiting her mother in New Hampshire:

> Dearest: I have just written my resignation of the office of P.M. General. When the Baltimore Convention passed a resolution requesting the President to re-organize his Cabinet, I told him not to stand on any ceremony with me but to be frank and tell me whenever he thought it advisable for him that I should quit. This morning he wrote me saying that time had come, and accordingly my resignation has now been written and will be delivered when I go to the other end of the Avenue. He made me no explanation and I asked none. I suppose, however, that he thinks it will help to appease the Fremonters' and Radicals, if I am dropped, and I think myself it will give them a temporary triumph to see me reduced to the ranks, which will operate well. Well, I am content, and I shall act just as I intended to act before resigning. . . .
>
> The President has, I think given himself and me too, an unnecessary mortification in this matter; but then I am not the best judge and I am sure he acts from the best motives. I do not think he will, if he succeeds, permit me to be the worse for it; but I am sure it is for the best all around.

Blair's resignation came as a shock to his many admirers in the postal service. Thousands of letters poured in, most of them echoing the words of Cleveland Postmaster E. Cowles, who wrote:

> The country loses the services of the most efficient Postmaster General it has ever had.

The New York Times said in an editorial on September 26 that it was—

> universally conceded that no one of his predecessors has surpassed him in the energy, ability and fidelity with which he has discharged the duties of his office . . . the policy pursued by President Lincoln has had no more firm defender than he.

Blair continued in office until October 1, 1864, when his friend, William Dennison, who had been Governor of Ohio, took over as Postmaster General. He welcomed Dennison's appointment and the indication that his postal policies would be carried forward. Blair continued to enjoy Lincoln's confidence and remained politically active.

Francis Blair, Sr., made one last great effort for the administration. On December 15, 1864, Horace Greeley, the most prominent Republican agitator for peace, wrote to the elder Blair asking him to mediate between the warring States. After some consideration, Blair conferred with the President and received a signed card on which Lincoln had written:

> Allow the bearer, F. P. Blair, Sr. to pass our lines, go south, and return.

Blair traveled to the South twice on that pass. The unsuccessful Hampton Roads Conference of February 3, 1865, was a consequence of his two meetings with President Davis. Finally, on April 9, 1865, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox and the long, bitter struggle between the States was ended. Postmaster General Dennison immedately took steps to restore postal service in the South. Five days after the war closed, President Lincoln was shot to death by John Wilkes Booth.

Andrew Johnson

Only members of the Cabinet and a handful of special guests were invited to watch the new President, Andrew Johnson, take the oath of office. Among the guests were Montgomery Blair and Frank Blair, Sr. Their presence caused a shiver of uneasiness in Radical ranks.

Andrew Johnson had good reason to include the Blairs. They gave him aid at a time when he had few other friends in Washington. Johnson arrived from Tennessee for Lincoln's second inauguration weak and debilitated from an attack of typhoid fever. He asked to be excused from the inaugural ceremonies, but Lincoln wanted him present. Several people later testified that a friend gave him whisky so that he could stand the ceremony. Another story suggested that he drank wine from the Blair cellar. In any event, his inaugural speech was barely coherent and the Radicals afterward became fond of referring to him as "that drunken tailor."

The Blair family took Johnson to Silver Spring, where he stayed until he regained his health. The Blairs were happy to supply advice to the eager Johnson, who, impressed, declared them to be "among the best and most sensible men in the country."

The Cabinet soon learned that, despite his respect for the Blair family, Andrew Johnson was his own man. He was moderate, firm, and incorruptible. A famous visitor to America, Charles Dickens, wrote of him in 1868:

> I was very much surprised by the President's face and manner. It is, in its way, one of the most remarkable faces I have ever seen. Not imaginative but very powerful in its firmness (or perhaps obstinacy), strength of will, and steadiness of purpose. There is a reticence in it, too, curiously at variance with that first unfortunate speech of his. . . .

President Johnson twice attempted to repay his debt to the Blairs. He requested that Frank Blair, Jr., be appointed, first as collector of customs at St. Louis, and then as Minister to Austria. Both times the Senate refused.

The Blairs supported Johnson in his attempt to carry out a moderate program of reconstruction, but as the Radicals consolidated their hold on the Republican Party, the family returned to the Democratic fold. In 1868 Frank Blair, Jr., became vice-presidential candidate on the Democratic ticket headed by Horatio Seymour that lost to Republicans Ulysses S. Grant and Schuyler Colfax. He later served as a Democratic member of the Missouri Legislature and as Senator from Missouri. Montgomery Blair rebuilt Falkland and once again became active in Maryland politics. He organized the movement that restored self-government to Maryland in 1865. Frank Blair, Jr., died in 1875 at the age of 54 and was followed a year later by his father.

Montgomery Blair supported the Democrat, Samuel Tilden, for President against Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876. The voting returns of three States were disputed on grounds of fraud. Blair struggled for months to make a special electoral commission decide in favor of Tilden, but the vote went to Hayes. Blair was not easily reconciled. As editor of the *Washington Globe,* he

persisted in his opposition to the legality of Hayes' claim. He even declined an administrative post with the assertion that Hayes was not legally President.

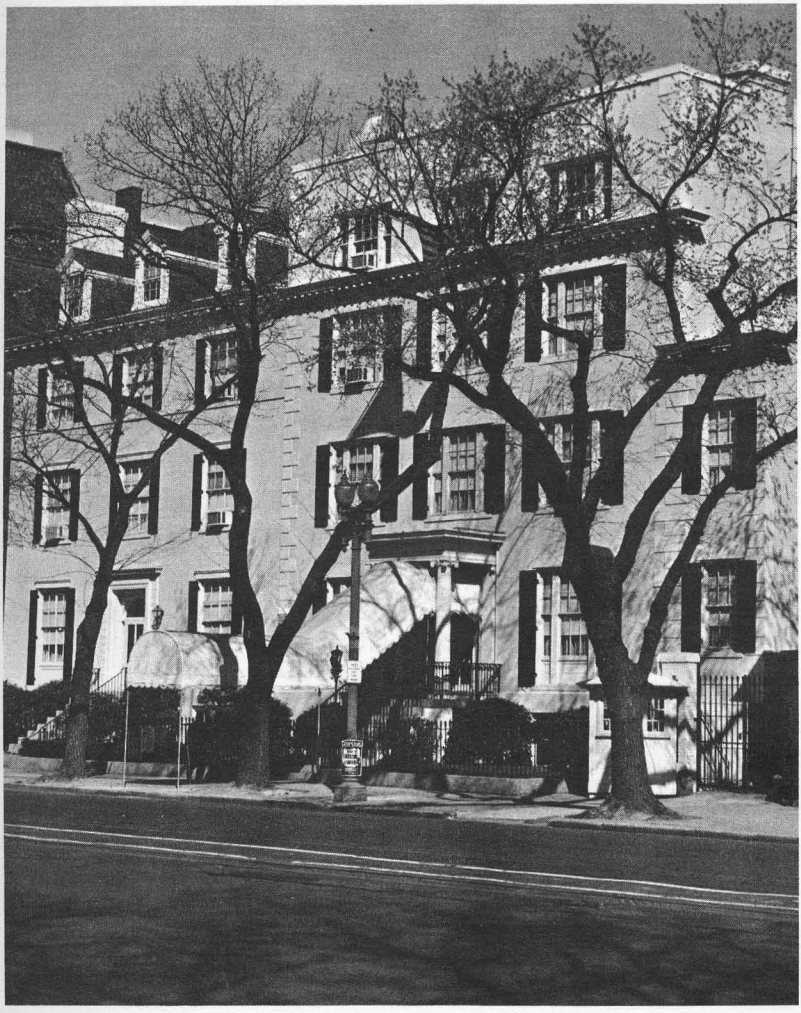
Blair also continued in the practice of law, setting up a law firm in association with his son, Woodbury. Woodbury, and Blair's other lawyer sons, Gist and Montgomery, Jr., continued the partnership for many years after their father's death. Montgomery Blair died of a spinal disease on July 27, 1883, at the age of 70.

The 16th Street entrance to the District of Columbia at Silver Spring is called Blair Portal and honors Montgomery Blair, as does Silver Spring's Montgomery Blair High School. The names of Blair Road, Blair Mill Road, Gist Avenue, and Selim Road in the District of Columbia, all hark back to the Blair family. The two homes in Silver Spring are gone. Silver Spring was razed in 1955. Falkland was destroyed in 1958 to make way for a shopping center.

Blair House

Blair House and Blair-Lee House endure and are in full use. When, early in this century, it seemed likely that Blair House would be torn down to make way for a public building, Montgomery Blair's daughter, Minna Blair Richey, made a memorable appeal to the Senate committee considering the matter:

> The house appears on the earliest maps of the city. After it was purchased by my grandfather, the late Frank Preston Blair, in 1835, it was the rendezvous of Thomas Benton, Van Buren, Levi Woodbury, Silas Wright, and other political leaders of the day. It was our house that was rented to Honorable George Bancroft, the historian, who lived in it while he was Secretary of the Navy in President Polk's administration. It was also rented to the Honorable Thomas Ewing, who was Secretary of the Treasury and Secretary of the Interior under President Tyler. General Sherman was married in the drawing room of this house and often pointed out to me the exact spot where he stood during the ceremony. My father, the late Montgomery Blair, occupied the house as his city residence from 1854 to the time of his death and it



Blair House

was in the dining room at a dinner given by him to General Robert E. Lee that Lee was told of Lincoln's wish that he should accept command of the U.S. Army (in field) at the outbreak of the Civil War, which he subsequently declined.

The plan to destroy the venerable building collapsed.

Before World War II, important international visitors were housed either at the White House or at hotels in Washington.

Neither arrangement proved adequate. The hotels failed to provide dignity or friendliness and the White House was unequal to the burden. Possession of Blair House passed from Gist Blair to his nephew, Dr. Montgomery Blair III, in 1940. In the following year it was purchased by the Government for use as the President's guesthouse.

When the house was advertised in Francis Blair, Sr.'s, own newspaper before he decided to buy it, it was described as a—

> spacious two-story brick building with basement; was built by the late proprietor for his permanent residence and has every convenience for a family in and about it; a well of excellent water in the yard, a brick stable and carriage house adjacent the alley, flowers, and fruit gardens, tastefully laid out and highly cultivated.

Today the house is four stories high, the third and fourth floors having been added by Montgomery and Gist Blair, respectively. The front portico and doorway were restored to conform to the architecture of the Federal period. The original brick is now covered with stucco and painted pale yellow.

When the White House was closed for reconstruction in 1948, President Truman and his family moved into Blair House. In November 1950, while the President rested in a front bedroom, an assassin attempted to enter the house. A guard died by the assassin's bullet in defending the President.

As the President's guesthouse, Blair House has added a new dimension to its long role as a social and political gathering place. To read its guest list is to read the names of the world's leaders in the last two decades.

Eighty years after Montgomery Blair's death, the house keeps the Blair name in the news. An even greater memorial to Montgomery Blair is the efficiency of the U.S. postal service, which he did so much to further.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1963 O—682737

Blair Family

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Deborah Webster
19 N. Elm St.
Bridgeton NJ 08302

Special Collections

March 1, 1993

I am enclosing a research report listing the sources I checked for your ancestors. As you can see, I did not find many references to them. Howard Cramer did marry Jessie Peck in Terre Haute, and they had a child born here. A Roy Blair married a Marie Carlin here. Could he have been Arthur's brother?

The Soundex to the 1900 Indiana census does not list a John Blair with a wife Abby and son Arthur. Are you sure Arthur was born here? Howard Cramer is not listed on the Soundex to the 1920 Indiana census. Apparently he did not stay here long. There is no index to the 1910 Indiana census. However, both John Blair and Howard Cramer were listed in the 1910 Terre Haute city directory.

If you would like copies of the marriage records, our charge is 15¢ per page, plus postage. We only have an index to the birth certificates, not the actual records. Those are filed in the Vigo County Health Dept., Vital Statistics, 201 Cherry St., Terre Haute IN 47807.

You might also try writing the genealogical query column in the local newspaper. The address is: Genealogy, Dorothy Clark, Terre Haute Tribune-Star, P.O. Box 149, Terre Haute IN 47808.

Nancy Sherrill
Genealogy Librarian

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
One Library Square
Terre Haute IN 47807

DATE: _____

VIGO CO. LIBRARY RESEARCH REPORT

The item(s) circled below indicate the record(s) searched for the surnames of: Blair: John + Abby (Mason), Arthur W., George, Roy + in response to your request of 2-21-93. Cramer: Reuben + Howard

(1) Miscellaneous Card File:
Did not find John, etc. Found Other Blairs

(2) Surname File:
Did not find Cramer Found Blair Family File has pamphlet on Montgomery Blair, postmaster general. He was born in Franklin Co KY 10 May 1813

(3) Vigo County, Indiana, Index of Names of Persons and of Firms (in the county histories)
Did not find Arthur, Abby, etc Found Blair, John - Bradsby p 292, 344, 648; Other Blairs - Barbara, Catherine, Elmer, Everett Jr., Frank, Frank P., J. N., J. T., James, John T. - Bradsby p 682; Laura F., Mary C., Michael Cover)

4. Vigo County, Indiana, Marriage Licenses from 1818 to 1850:
Did not find _____ Found _____

(5) W.P.A. Index to Marriage Record, Vigo County, 1840-1920:
Did not find Arthur, George, Found Blair, Roy + Marie Carlin 13 Nov 1920 Bk 55 p 206; No John Blair who married an Abby
Cramer, Howard + Jessie J. Peck 27 May 1911 Bk 30 p 459

(6) W.P.A. Index to Death Record, Vigo County, 1882-1920:
Did not find John, Abby Found Other Blairs: Catherine, Clara, Dorothy, Francis M., Frank E., Irene, Joseph, Leo, Mary J., Stella
No Reuben Cramer

(7) Cemetery Records of Vigo County, Including All Born Prior to 1830 That Lived to Maturity:
Did not find John + Abby Found Other Blairs: James + Constant, Robert + Sarah + Ellen, W. C.

(8) Cemeteries, Vigo County, Indiana (4 vols.):
Did not find _____ Found vol 2 p 56 + 57 There was a John T. Blair (1843 - 1897) in Fletcher Chapel Cem. but no Abby

(9) Woodlawn Cemetery, Terre Haute, Vigo County IN, Index of Burials Vol. 1 1839-1899 vol. 2 1900-March 1983:
Did not find John, etc. Found Other Blairs

(10) Census Index for the year 1900:
Did not find _____ Found 1900 Soundex for Indiana Census
No John Blair with a wife Abby + Son Arthur
No Howard Cramer in 1900 or 1920 census

(Other:) (also check other side)
WPA Index to Birth Records, Vigo County, 1882 - 1920 - No Arthur W. Blair, No children of John + Abby Blair,
Cramer, Rubie - Father Howard - Mother J. J. Peck - born 25 May 1912(?) Bk CH 26 p 127

#3. Other Blairs: Murtie J., Ollie E., Robert, Sadie, Samuel, Sarah E., William, Willis
Cramer: Rosanna & W. N.

1910 Terre Haute City Directory
Cramer, Howard - Laborer - 2103 N. 13th St.
Blair, John - glassblower - 2103 N. 13th St.

Feb 21, 1993

To Whom it may Concern,

Blair
B460
Cramer
C656

My grandfather Arthur W. Blair born June 22, 1896 and his family was in Terre Haute, Indiana. Maybe when he was a young boy or teenager. Somewhere in the early 1800's.

His parents were John Blair and Abby Mason. Arthur Blair was their first child together, after him was George and Roy. Abby was married before John to a Reuben Cramer. She died at 30 years old in New Jersey. She had a son with Reuben Cramer named Howard Cramer. Howard Cramer met ~~Jessie~~ Jessie Peck and married her, she was from Indiana. They were most likely to of been married between 1915 and 1925.

Please let me know if you can be of help and how much money I will need to send?

Thank You for your time.

Deborah Webster
19 N. Elm St
Bridgeton, N.J
08302

1910 City Directory

Cramer, Howard - laborer - 2103 N. 13th

Blatz, John - glassblower - 2103 N. 13th

Descendants of Robert Blair

Generation No. 1

1. ROBERT[1] BLAIR[1] was born Abt. 1785 in York, PA[1], and died 14 Aug 1817 in Jefferson Co., KY[2]. He married ELIZABETH RAINBOW[3] 14 Apr 1810 in Jefferson Co., KY[4], daughter of 1ST RAINBOW and CATHERINE REMBOW. She was born Abt. 1790 in York, PA, and died 1833 in Jefferson Co., KY[5].

Notes for ROBERT BLAIR:
Robert Blair & Elizabeth Rainbow
Marriage Bond
April 14, 1810

Know all men by these presents that we Robert Blare and Peter Miller of Jefferson County and State of Kentucky are held and firmly bound unto Charlie Scott present Governor of Kentucky and his successors in office in the full and just sum of fifty pounds current money to be paid to said governor or his successors in office to be paid ourselves our heirs jointly and severally firmly by these presents state with our seal this 14 day of April 18 1 0.
The condition of the above obligations is such that whereas there is a marriage shortly intended to be had and solemnized between the said Blare and wife Elizabeth Rainbow of lawful age. For which a license hath this day issued by Worden Pope, Clerk of the
County Court of Jefferson County. Now if there shall be no lawful cause to obstruct said marriage then this obligation to be void otherwise to remain in full force.
Edward Tyler, Jr. Robert Blair (his seal) Peter Miller (his mark) (his seat)
Witness Bondsman

Jefferson County, KY

This day Peter Miller came in his proper person before me, Worden Pope, Clerk of the County Court of said county and made oath that the within named Elizabeth Rainbow is twenty one years of age and upward to the best of his knowledge and belief Given under my hand this 14 day of April 1810.
Worden Pope

' Marriage Register, page 67. Jefferson County Virginia-Kentucky Early Marriages, Bogk- 1, 1781-1826, complied by The Fdson Club, Cook & McDowell Publishers,
2General Charles Scott (I 73 9-1813) was a Revolutionary War officer and the fourth governor of Kentucky, 1808-1812.

3One hundred and sixty-six dollars and sixty-six and two-thirds cents.

Children of ROBERT BLAIR and ELIZABETH RAINBOW are:

2. i. ROBERT[2] BLAIR, b. 18 Nov 1813, Jefferson Co., KY; d. 26 Sep 1873, Vigo Co., IN - 59 Yr.; 10 Mo; 8 Days.
3. ii. SAMUEL B. BLAIR, b. 1811, Jefferson Co., KY; d. 1853, Jefferson Co., KY.

Generation No. 2

2. ROBERT[2] BLAIR *(ROBERT[1])*[6] was born 18 Nov 1813 in Jefferson Co., KY[7], and died 26 Sep 1873 in Vigo Co., IN - 59 Yr.; 10 Mo; 8 Days[8]. He married (1) SARAH MOORE[9] 15 Jan 1833 in Jefferson Co., KY[10], daughter of GEORGE MOORE. She was born 09 Jun 1812 in KY[11], and died 15 Sep 1861 in Vigo Co., IN - 49 Yrs.; 3 Mo.; 6 Days[11]. He married (2) ELLEN Aft. 1861. She was born Abt. Jun 1817[12], and died 12 Jan 1889 in 71 yrs., 5 Mo., 16 days (information from graves stone on same stone with Robert Blair.[12].

Notes for ROBERT BLAIR:
Robert was a ward of John Brindley (Jacob?) Sr., when he married

Children of ROBERT BLAIR and SARAH MOORE are:

4. i. WILLIAM[3] BLAIR, b. 01 Nov 1833, Jefferson Co., KY; d. 20 May 1886, Clark Co., IL.
ii. GEORGE M. BLAIR[13], b. 31 Dec 1835, Jefferson Co., KY[14]; d. 23 Aug 1856, Vigo Co., IN - 20 Yrs.; 7 Mo.; 23 Days[14]; m. NANCY MCKINZIE.
5. iii. ELIZABETH BLAIR, b. 28 Oct 1837, Jefferson Co., KY; d. 20 Mar 1875, Vigo Co., IN.
iv. DAVID M. BLAIR[15], b. 12 Jul 1840, Jefferson Co., KY[16]; d. 16 Mar 1864, Vigo Co., IN - 23 Yrs.; 8 Mo.; 4 Days in the Service of his country[17].
6. v. JOHN THOMAS BLAIR, b. 13 Feb 1843, Jefferson Co., KY; d. 21 Jul 1897, Marion Co., Indiana.
7. vi. AMANDA BLAIR, b. 04 Jul 1847, Jefferson Co., KY; d. 11 Jan 1913, Vigo Co., IN.
vii. SAMUEL T. BLAIR[18], b. 02 Dec 1849, Jefferson Co., KY[19]; d. 15 Nov 1889, Vigo Co., IN - 39 Yrs.; 11 Mo.; 19 Days committed suicide by cutting his throat with his own razor.[20].

Notes for SAMUEL T. BLAIR:
Samuel T. Blair never married

8. viii. ROBERT MILTON BLAIR, b. 21 Jul 1852, Jefferson Co., KY; d. 20 Nov 1912, Madison Jefferson Co., IN.

3. SAMUEL B.[2] BLAIR *(ROBERT[1])*[21] was born 1811 in Jefferson Co., KY[21], and died 1853 in Jefferson Co., KY. He married (1) MARY CATHERINE SCAMMAHORN 12 Feb 1832 in Jefferson Co., KY[22]. She was born 1810 in PA. He married (2) MARY CATHERINE SCAMMAHORN 21 May 1845 in Union Co., KY[23]. She was born 1810 in PA.

Notes for SAMUEL B. BLAIR:

Children of SAMUEL BLAIR and MARY SCAMMAHORN are:

i. SUSAN E.[3] BLAIR[24], b. 1840, KY.
ii. MARTHA BLAIR[24], b. 1848, KY.

Children of SAMUEL BLAIR and MARY SCAMMAHORN are:

iii. ROBERT A.[3] BLAIR[25], b. 1833, KY; m. ALICE TIMMERMAN[26].
iv. JOHN BLAIR[26], b. 1836, KY; m. ALICE SISSONS[26].
v. JULIA ANN BLAIR[27], b. 17 Aug 1838, Jefferson Co., KY.
vi. MARY CATHERINE BLAIR[27], b. 16 Mar 1839, KY; m. JOHN MOORE[28].

Generation No. 3

4. WILLIAM[3] BLAIR *(ROBERT[2], ROBERT[1])*[28] was born 01 Nov 1833 in Jefferson Co., KY[29], and died 20 May 1886 in Clark Co., IL. He married MARY JANE STARK[30] 08 Jan 1857 in Vigo Co, IN[31]. She was born 19 Dec 1839, and died 29 Jun 1913[31].

Children of WILLIAM BLAIR and MARY STARK are:

9. i. GEORGE[4] BLAIR, b. 15 Aug 1863; d. 13 Aug 1925.
ii. LILY M. BLAIR[32], b. 29 Jan 1867[33]; d. 10 Sep 1868[33].
iii. CHARLES H. BLAIR[34], b. 29 Mar 1871[35]; d. 27 Aug 1872, Casey, IL[35].
iv. ROYAL M. BLAIR[36], b. 21 Aug 1875[37]; d. 09 Sep 1881, Case, IL[37].
v. MABEL S. BLAIR[38], b. 04 Feb 1879; d. 10 Feb 1948, Casey, IL.

5. ELIZABETH[3] BLAIR *(ROBERT[2], ROBERT[1])*[39] was born 28 Oct 1837 in Jefferson Co., KY[40], and died 20 Mar 1875 in Vigo Co., IN[40]. She married THOMAS GARDNER[41] 07 Nov 1861[42].

Children of ELIZABETH BLAIR and THOMAS GARDNER are:

i. JENNY[4] GARDNER.
ii. JOHN GARDNER[43].
iii. JOSEPH GARDNER[44].
iv. MARY GARDNER[44].
v. SARAH GARDNER[44].

6. JOHN THOMAS[3] BLAIR *(ROBERT[2], ROBERT[1])*[45] was born 13 Feb 1843 in Jefferson Co., KY[46], and died 21 Jul 1897 in Marion Co., Indiana[47]. He married BARBARA ELLEN REISINGER/RISINGER[48] 02 Feb 1868 in Vigo Co., IN[49], daughter of JOHN RISINGER and MARGARET HARRIS. She was born 16 May 1850 in Louisville, Kentucky[50], and died 26 May 1928 in Indiana[51].

Notes for JOHN THOMAS BLAIR:

ID: I1646
Name: John T BLAIR
Sex: M
Birth: 17 SEP 1843 in Jefferson Co KY
Death: 21 JUL 1897 in Marion Co IN
Burial: Fletcher Chapel Vigo Co
Occupation: farmer
Religion: Methodist
Change Date: 28 JAN 1999
Note: Enlisted in CoD 43rd IN V. I. for 3 years, was in gunboat service, taking part in battle at Helena. Discharged with typhoid-maflaria fever; re-enlisted 6 mos later in same company until end of war. Mustered out at Ind.

Father: Robert BLAIR b: 18 NOV 1813 in Jefferson Co KY
Mother: Sarah MOORE b: 9 JUN 1812 in KY

Marriage 1 Barbara REISENGER b: 6 MAY 1850
Married: 2 FEB 1867
Children
Myrtie J BLAIR
Sadie BLAIR
Willis BLAIR
Robert BLAIR
Laura F BLAIR
Ollie E BLAIR
Everett S BLAIR

Source: 2614 total entries, last updated Sun May 28 15:57:08 2000
judy dukes <judyd@abcs.com>

Notes for BARBARA ELLEN REISINGER/RISINGER:

Grandma Barbara Risinger Blair
As written by Gertrude M. Agin Borror
(Copied from original article by Charles E. Borror)

Grandma Blair, Mom, Aunt Ollie, and Uncle Everett moved from their farm to Shelburn, Indiana. The farm work was too much for them after Grandpa died. Grandma Blair bought a 3 room house in Shelburn and had Grandpa's Civil War Pension to help. They raised chickens and pigs had a huge garden and fruit trees. They also made men's shirts for a shirt factory in Terre Haute, Indiana.

They had a small house outside the kitchen which was called a wash house, here they did their washing. They carried their water from an outside pump to the kitchen where the water was heated on the stove, then carried it back to the wash house for the washing.

Shelburn was a mining town and the farmers worked in the mines when work was available in the coal mines. Dad worked on the railroad in Ohio, work was slack here in Ohio, so Dad with his friend went to Shelburn to work in the coal mines. Grandma Blair turned the wash house into a bunk house, then took in several men to room and board . They ate in the kitchen and slept in the bunk house.

That was how Mom met Dad. The job in the mines was just temporary, so Dad went back to his railroad job in Ohio.

Dad came back to Indiana married Mom, took her back to Ohio. They lived in the South Side of the City, where I was born, then moved to the West Side so Dad would be closer to his work.

Grandma Blair was a hard working women. the neighbors always depended on her to help in sickness and with childbirth. She was a wonderful housekeeper, her house was always immaculate. Her yard was huge and I remember how she raised roses. She would take a rose stem put it in a potato, dig a hole and after placing it in the ground would put a quart mason jar over it. Always a new rose bush would grow. (Note the article taken from the "Country Living Gardener" February. 2001 issue captioned Potato Magic")

Grandma's brother, Uncle George and Aunt Sally and their four children, lived across the road from Grandma. Her other brother, Uncle Joe and Aunt Milviney, lived at Farmersburg, Indiana. with their twelve children.

Eldon Taylor was the first grand child. He was spoiled and pampered by his Grandmother Blair, Mom, before she married, Aunt Ollie and of course his mother. Eldon always bragged on Grandma Blair's cooking, so when he was at school , Aunt Myrtle would bake a cake or pie or fix chicken, take it over to grandma's. Eldon would eat and say how much better Grandma's cooking was than his Mother's. Eldon attended college at Indianapolis and graduated as a Pharmacies and had his own Pharmacy. He married, but had no children.

Vernon was the quite, easy going one. He was smart in school, a hard worker and attended church regular. He married had two children and went to Toledo, Ohio to work and live.

Roy was the black sheep of the family and was sure good to us and always showed us a good time. He was just daring, full of pep, and Grandma and his Aunts would have preferred a more quite and gentle boy.

Grandma's Sister Aunt Nan, her husband and children lived in Illinois.

Early every spring Grandma Blair would select her choice rooster, put him in a pen by himself, where he would be fed special so he would be big and fat for one of our Sunday Dinners.

I almost forgot about our beds. Mom and Dad slept in the folding bed in the front room, Grandma and Aunt Ollie slept in the bed and room next to the kitchen. We, children, slept on the feather beds, which were stored in the huge closet off the kitchen. the feather beds were filled with down, much hard work and many chickens to furnish the down. These were put on the floor in Grandma's room.

Aunt Myrtle and Uncle John's land joined Grandma Blair's yard. Uncle John had many acres of farm land, and a huge barn. There were horses, cows, pigs, and many chickens, an apple and peach orchard. Aunt Ollie would help Aunt Myrtle with the milking, and churning in exchange for milk and butter.

Grandma Blair would cut one toe from each of her chickens so that they could tell them apart, in case they strayed from the chicken yard.

Uncle John had his house built and he let his friends talk him into ceilings 12 ft. high. The house was cool in the summer but hard to heat in the winter and the Indiana winters are cold. Uncle John also had one of first touring cars in Shelburn. His youngest boy would take a speedy ride down the bumpy dusty road from their house to town.

Everyday we would roam the fields, explore the wooded areas, wade the creeks, build sand castles and fish from the little wooden bridge across the road. We used to bend pins and caught fish three inches long. What a thrill! Grandma Blair had huge maple tree in her front yard and every evening after supper, the family would gather for reminiscing and the telling of new events and happenings in the neighborhood. We, children, would be in Aunt Myrtle's kitchen helping ourselves to the new batch of sugar cookies baked on purpose for the raid. These cookies were sure good and would hold us over with a couple of apples until morning.

Aunt Myrtle had a building a few steps from the house where she did her washing and this building was also used for storage space. Outside the building there was a cemented floor and a counter attached to the building so Aunt Myrtle could pluck her chickens, shuck corn, prepare vegetables for canning. At the side of the building was a deep cemented cellar with a drain, shelves for storing canned vegetables, and for cream and butter. Above the cellar on the outside was a storage space, but all I can remember was the huge ice cream freezer that was stored in this place. Two or three times a week the freezer was brought out washed again and rinsed and rinsed in cool water from the pump. The cream was skimmed from part of the crocks of milk and fresh eggs and other ingredients were put together for another freezer of home made ice cream. Next to the wash house was the smoke house where the smoked hams were hung from the rafters. Next to the smoke house was huge black kettle where the soap was made.

They had a huge yard and next to the house was a wooden swing, seats across from each other. Four of us would get in the swing and swing so hard and fast. I still wonder why the swing didn't topple over. In the front of the house was the only cement side walk along the road. Everyone walked at the side of the hot dusty road.

Grandma Blair had oil lamps and Aunt Myrtle had electric lights and a wall crank telephone. You would turn the crank at the side of the phone and I think everyone that had a phone would listen in. Everyone had their own ring, one long and two shorts or three longs, but the phone was as good as a newspaper.

The bathroom was down a long narrow path far away from the house. Another cement walk to the coal house and where we kids cracked walnuts just ate the goodies that fell out and left the rest for the chickens to pick out. We had great times and plenty of good food. The names Blair and Taylor were highly respected in town of Indiana.

Barbara Risinger Blair Obituary

(Writer unknown, although thought to be one of the surviving children)

Barbara Risinger , daughter of John and Margaret Risinger was born in Louisville, KY, on May 16,1850. departed this life on May 26, 1928, age 78 yr.. and 10 days.

She was united in marriage to John T. Blair on Feb. 2, 1868. To this union was born seven children -

Husband: **JOSEPH BLAHA**

Born: 16-Aug-1849 in: Prussia, Germany
Died: 20-Dec-1903 in: Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
Buried: St. Josephs in: Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
Ref: Occupation: lumberman
Father: JOHN BLAHA
Mother: UNKNOWN

Wife: **CATHARINE McGRATH**
Married: 21-Nov-1877 in: Vigo County, Indiana

Born: Sep 1854 in: Ireland
Died: 05-Jul-1907 in: Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
Buried: St. Joseph's in: Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
Father: PATRICK McGRATH
Mother: UNKNOWN

1 M FRANK BLAIR	Born: 10-Sep-1878	Indiana
sp. CURA CHARLOTTE KNOWLES	Married: 20-Jul-1908	Vigo County, Indiana
Born: 13-Jul-1871 Died:	Died: 07-Sep-1927	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
	Buried: St. Joseph's	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
2 M CHARLES "BUTCH" BLAIR	Born: Jul 1880	Indiana
sp. VIDA E. PUNCH	Married: 19-Dec-1901	Vigo County, Indiana
	Died: October 1938	West Unity, Williams County, Ohio
	Buried:	
3 M JOSEPH LEO BLAIR	Born: 10-Mar-1882	Vigo County, Indiana
	Died: 31-May-1917	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
	Buried: St. Joseph's	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
4 F MAYME E. BLAIR	Born: 10-Nov-1883	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
sp. WILLIAM G. ROBISON	Married: 18-Oct-1905	Vigo County, Indiana
Born: 28-Oct-1881 Died: 09-Dec-1945	Died: 01-Nov-1935	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
	Buried: Roselawn Cem.	Otter Creek Twsp, Vigo County, Indiana
5 F LUCY AGNES BLAIR	Born: 27-Aug-1888	Vigo County, Indiana
sp. JOHN W. COLLINS	Married:	
Born: 1884 Died: Feb 1975	Died: Feb 1959	St. Joe, Michigan
	Buried: St. Joseph's	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
6 M HARRY HENRY BLAIR	Born: 22-Dec-1889	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
sp. LULA MAY BLUNK	Married: 22-Oct-1907	
Born: 31-Jan-1888 Died: 31-Aug-1964	Died: 21-Nov-1958	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
	Buried: Woodlawn Cem.	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
7 M OSCAR JOHN BLAIR	Born: 18-Jul-1895	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana
	Died: 22-Sep-1965	W. Lafayette, Tippecanoe County, Indiana
	Buried: St. Joseph's	Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana

Please address correspondence to :
Stephen M. Blair
321 West Giles Street
Sullivan, IN 47882